

How Jesus Found Me in the Wilderness

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“Come and hear, all ye that fear God,
and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.”

Psalm 66:16

As a teenager growing up in a Lutheran church, I was very keen to understand what it means to be saved by faith. I knew I had to believe in Jesus Christ, but I did not fully grasp what salvation was. My knowledge of God was purely academic. I knew of Him, but I did not know Him. In other words, He was in my mind but not my heart. Consequently, for many years, I failed to find the answer to the question: how could I be saved?

I spent a lot of time struggling to find the answers and was so frustrated that eventually, I just gave up looking. Many years later, the answers came. Admittedly, that happened after I had already pursued a very worldly life full of excess, addictions, and wickedness. I was indeed a wretched man focused only on myself. Truth is there was a big void in my life, and I was desperately trying to kill the emptiness within me with all the flavours of vanity. It did not work.

I do not know exactly when the Lord started drawing me to Himself. I cannot pinpoint the exact day or hour, but I remember what seemed like minor things, small events that happened to me. Today, I believe God was calling me through those things. Let me give you an idea of what I am talking about. One day, I asked someone to bring my long-forgotten and dusted confirmation Bible to me from Poland. At that time, I told my wife Marta that I felt the urge to be closer to God and wanted to visit the Polish church nearby. But I still did not know the Lord.

When did I meet Jesus?

It was in April 2017. I was already searching for God and reading the Bible regularly for a couple of months. I went to Nepal to fulfil my lifelong dream of

going to Himalaya. I was doing the Annapurna Circuit Trek, one of the most beautiful trekking routes in the world. It goes through the highest mountain pass in the world called Thorong La. At its extreme altitude of nearly 18,000 feet, there is only 50% of oxygen available compared to the sea level. This creates serious risks for any mountaineer.



You see, I was well aware of the dangers but so blindfolded by my dream, that I completely ignored all the signs my body was sending. I ignored the persistent headaches and breathlessness. I took longer breaks for recovery at the villages I was passing. I thought my acclimatization would progress and eventually, my body would get accustomed to the new conditions. But I was wrong.

As I trekked higher and higher, I started losing the ability to make reasonable decisions. I was on my own in the high, desolate mountains in serious trouble. By God's providence, I met another climber who saw I was in a critical condition. I was very dizzy, barely uttering words, and unable to walk. Very quickly, a rescue operation was organised. A number of people moved me to lower levels of the pass. A small, flat spot was there where a rescue helicopter could land and transport me to get medical help.

They took me to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. When we landed, there was an ambulance waiting to take me to the hospital. When I got to the hospital, I was immediately plugged into a variety of machines. I was at death's door. In fact, the doctors had to x-ray my chest twice because it seemed improbable that I could be still alive with the amount of liquid in my lungs. I was given steroids and was hooked up to an oxygen mask all the time. For three days, I lay helpless and weak in a specialist clinic. I could not walk to the bathroom on my own. Brothers and sisters, look at me now. I am a miracle standing here today in front of you. No one expected me to be alive today, but God touched me.

The days I spent on my sick bed forced me to reflect deeply on my life. I was in tears when I realised that while I may have been already believing in Jesus Christ, I did absolutely nothing to share my faith with my family and children. I bore no fruit. I cried out to the Lord as I was certain of my death. I pleaded with Him to have mercy on me and let me go back home to tell my family about Jesus. I was hoping He would listen and give me at least a couple of months to live. I knew He was the only one who had the power to do so.

God was merciful, and a couple of days later, I left the hospital even though I was still feeling weak. Still, I longed to get back to the mountain treks. I had one week left until my return flight back home. So, in spite of all that happened, I decided to head back up the mountains. This time, I chose a new destination, which was lower in altitude that would be safe for my condition. I decided to climb Poon Hill. It required that I trek for 3 days before I could reach the summit. As I was walking through these mountains, passing the beautiful landscapes and total wilderness, I felt broken worthless, and more sinful than I ever did before. I was really down-spirited and conscious of how much I had sinned against the Lord God. It made me cry again. This was a very different cry. I was crying about the miserable condition of my soul. I felt devastated by sin and my shameless life. This feeling of what I later recognised as my first true repentance was with me until I got almost to the top of the mountain. It was then and there I realised I had to come to the cross with all the burdens I was carrying. I had to come to Jesus as sinful as I was, and He would not reject me.

Poon Hill offers a wonderful view and panorama of the Himalaya mountains range. I left the nearby village at 3 AM in the morning to ensure I could see the sunrise from the top. As the first rays of the sun were glowing on my face, I felt deeply and profoundly touched by the love of Christ. I knew I was forgiven. I knew He died for me and my sins.

I did not realise until a few months later this moment was probably my new birth. It was one week after Easter and just as the sun began to rise above the beautiful mountains so was a new beginning in me. The light of our Lord Jesus Christ was shining into my heart that very morning.

A few weeks later, I came upon a verse in 2 Corinthians that astonishingly accurately described what happened to me:

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.”

2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

When I read this, I realised I was touched by the very same love of Jesus Christ that transformed the apostle Paul on his way to Damascus, and I was called with the very same faith that brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. I knew I was anointed by the very same Holy Spirit that bears witness to the truth and teaches us everything.

What happened to me was quite extraordinary. My life has been turned upside down. The Lord answered my prayer and allowed me to go back home to my family.

I gave up many of the old habits that kept me in bondage. Not all at once, as some of the chains were stronger than the others. But the gentle love and power of our Saviour Jesus Christ were consistently pulling me from the depths of my depravity and sinful life.

The change within me was not unnoticed by my relatives. Some of my distant family could not accept the new me; they turned away and have not spoken to me up to this day. Unknowingly, they fulfil the words of our Lord Jesus who said He did not come to send peace but a sword (Matthew 10:34-36).

Thankfully, my wife and children did not turn away. We started to read the Word of God and pray together. In the beginning, after my return, we would do it once a week, then twice a week. These days, we read the Bible together and have family devotional time every day. We are living by the Word of God and Jesus Christ is present under our roof. He is in the center of all our relations. He is the source of everlasting joy in our lives.

My hope is that the Lord's grace will let me exalt Jesus Christ in my life for His glory to be known. For I live for Him now. Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Savior. Amen.